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# Assembly California Legislature

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## **CALIFORNIA HEALTHY PETS ACT**

*Healthier Pets, Safer Communities*

Each year, almost one million unwanted and abandoned cats and dogs are born in the state of California. Left unspayed and un-neutered, these animals propagate far beyond the capacity of local shelters, animal rescue groups and the community to accommodate them. Shelters are often forced to euthanize young and healthy animals to make room for more; puppies and kittens are euthanized at the highest rate, twice as many cats than dogs. The financial costs to taxpayers, and the emotional toll suffered by shelter employees and the communities who take care of these animals are extremely high. Local governments spend more than \$250 million each year to intake, care for, and ultimately kill over half of California's unwanted animals.

Legislation requiring spaying and neutering of cats and dogs is a reasonable, proven-effective and necessary means to greatly reduce the number of unwanted animals and the practice of euthanizing healthy adoptable animals in the state of California. For example, in 1995 the County of Santa Cruz implemented a mandatory spay and neuter ordinance in effort to reduce the high number of animals its shelters took in each year. By 2005, Santa Cruz County's intake number had plummeted by 64%, from 14,000 to 5,000 animals, the majority of which were already spayed or neutered. The County realized significant improvements after only two years and its overall reduction is particularly notable since the County experienced a 15% human population growth during the same time period.

It is medically proven that cats and dogs which are spayed or neutered live longer and healthier lives. Early spaying and neutering is recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association and advocated as "easier" to perform and "younger animals recover faster and with less pain." Spaying and neutering also protects and improves the health and safety of California's animals by reducing or eliminating a wide variety of health problems that are difficult and expensive to treat. The many health benefits include preventing unwanted pregnancies and devastating genetic conditions; reducing injury and death associated with aggressive behavior and the desire to stray; eliminating the risk and occurrence of cancer, tumors, cysts, hernias, infections and the development of other life-threatening diseases.

Spaying and neutering also results in significant public health and safety benefits, particularly: in the reduction of dangers caused by roaming stray animals, the transmission of rabies and other communicable animal diseases and the occurrences of dog bites. It is well documented that unaltered dogs are three-times more likely to attack humans and other animals. California suffers the nation's highest occurrences of dog bites, animal attacks and attack-related fatalities in the nation and children are the most common victims.

Reducing the number births of unwanted animals in the state of California will necessarily reduce the state's costs associated with caring for and euthanizing those same animals. According to the Animal Population Control Study Commission every dollar spent on spay and neuter surgeries saves taxpayers \$18.72 in future animal control costs over a ten-year period. These savings can instead be directed toward efforts that promote greater operational efficiency in California's shelters and better enable shelters to fulfill their mission - adoption, reunification and saving animals' lives.

The California Healthy Pets Act will save millions of taxpayer dollars, reduce the forced euthanasia of adoptable animals, help our pets stay healthy, and safeguard our communities. It's enactment will establish California as a national leader in the humane animal welfare and the no-kill movement.